1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

174

us to the consideration of the advent of metal in Ceylon. We know of no fact indicating that this was not worked in the island before the advent of Vijaya, on the contrary, Vijaya and his band were obviously only one of many parties of settlers who came from India in prehistoric times. Perhaps the record in the Mahavansa of the coming of Buddha to Mahayangana refers to one such immigrant party, and the legend of Rama may with even more probability be taken to refer to an invasion from the mainland. It is quite certain that Vijaya found some sort of stable political organization on his arrival in the island to which he came after his followers had been repulsed from Jambudipa on account of their lawless character. The account in the Mahavansa by no means suggests that Ceylon was absolutely *terra incognita*, and the readiness with which communication with the mainland was kept up, and the facility with which other bands of adventurers arrive, confirms this.

Although these bands probably came from the valley of the Ganges there is evidence that there were highly civilised maritime powers in Southern India 2000 years ago. The Mahavansa states in the most matter of fact way that Vijaya sought and obtained the hand of a Hindu bride, the daughter of the king of an important Tamil state, and nothing is said as to difficulties encountered by his ambassadors in proceeding to the court of the Pandyan king, or by the princess in coming to Ceylon. Again a Pandyan king twice sent ambassadors to Rome to Augustus Caesar, B.C. 26 and 20, and Strabo records that the annual exports to India reached the large sum of 55,000,000 sesterces (nearly £500,000)[1]. There is therefore every reason to believe that the early colonists from India were metal workers. Indeed, the matter becomes almost a certainty when it is remembered that no authenticated polished stone adze or axe head has been discovered in Ceylon, although many

[1] For these facts I am indebted to a work *The Tamils eighteen hundred years ago*, by Mr V. Kanakasabhai Pillai (Madras and Bangalore, 1904). Mr Pillai further states (p. 3) that from a "careful study of ancient Tamil poems" he is "led to think that some of the earliest works were undoubtedly composed more than two thousand years ago, and that the Tamil people acquired wealth and civilisation at this early period by their commercial intercourse with foreign nations such as the Arabs, Greeks, Romans and Japanese."

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 ancient sites have been excavated in certain districts, and gemming operations involving the digging out and examination of thousands of tons of gravel have taken place.

Probably the Nagas referred to in the Mahavansa are an immigrant race, and Mr Parker suggests that they may have been an offshoot of the Nayars of South-west India. Whether this is so or not the Nagas, according to Sinhalese historical works, drove the aborigines out of North and West Ceylon and "all Ceylon down to about Madawachchiya was known as Nagadipa (the Island of the Nagas) for many centuries after Christ[1]." Further, the compiler of the Mahavansa who wrote about the end of the fifth century A.D. relates that after appearing to the "yakkhas" at Mahayangana, Buddha visited Nagadipa where he composed a quarrel between Mahodara and Culodara a maternal uncle and nephew concerning the ownership of a "gem-set throne." It is further recorded that "the maternal uncle of Mahodara Mani Akkhika, the Naga king of Kalyani" near Colombo, was visited by Buddha at Kalyani on which account the Kalyani dagaba was subsequently built[2].

[1] This information is taken from one of Mr Parker's letters.

[2] The general tendency at the present time seems to be to regard the Nagas as mythical beings connected with the water. We cannot regard this belief as well founded, although it is only necessary to look through Brigade Surgeon C. F. Oldham's book (*The Sun and the Serpent*, London, 1905), to appreciate how many Nagas are regarded as demigods or heroes at the present day. But considering the extensive distribution of ancestor worship throughout India, this cannot be taken as an argument against the existence of human beings called Nagas, who must be distinguished from their deified dead.

There are at the present day powerful tribes called Nagas in Assam yet, as pointed out by Brigade Surgeon Oldham, the folklore of Northern India is full of legends connected with the supernatural powers of the Nagas. "These demigods are still propitiated, before any other deity, when the country is suffering from drought or excessive rain. And tradition says that human sacrifices were common, on such occasions, in days gone by." (*Op. cit.* pp. 49, 50.)

Burnouf (quoted by Oldham, *op. cit.* pp. 146, 147), records that in the time of Asoka the Nagas were numerous and powerful, for when "this king wishing to divide the relics of Buddha amongst the new stupas which he had built, went with an army to remove the relics from the old stupa at Ramagrama, the Nagas refused to allow him to do so. And Asoka, powerful as he was, did not persist.

"In the Vishnu Purana (IV, xxiv, 479, cited by Oldham, p. 147), it is said that nine Nagas will reign in Padmavati, Kantipura, and Mathara," and Oldham quotes Sir A. Cunningham to the effect that "these serpent chiefs, whose names he gives

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

174

All these facts suggest that metal must have been known in Ceylon before the invasion by Vijaya, and once introduced, there is no doubt that within a few years metal would have been distributed throughout the whole island.

Although the Veddas are all agreed that they were never otherwise in habits and culture than they are at the present time, every Sinhalese in the Vedirata believes that they once had great, powerful and wealthy chiefs and that they possessed hoards of gold and gems. Nevill, who takes somewhat their view, says: "Sinhalese, who are old and intelligent, and who have lived among Vaeddas, all agree that in ancient times Vaeddas...were often very rich and powerful. In such cases their wealth was put into gold cooking vessels, and strings of gems, etc., for their women. Poorer men had copper cooking vessels. The last of these gold vessels were lost by them during the long guerilla wars between the Kandians of Velasse and Dumbara, and Europeans, especially the English. The tradition is positive, and seems reliable. Nigala Banda, a splendid old Kandian chief, now Ratemahatmaya of Lower Bintenne, whose ancestors have lived amongst the Vaeddas of Nilgala from time immemorial, assures me there is no mistake in this, but their former use of gold cooking vessels is clearly true, and that people now-a-days have no idea how proud and powerful they were, until the *maha kaeraella* (the long war with the English)."

We could discover no reason for this belief, which seems to be effectually disposed of by the evidence of the very old Sinhalese informant whom we quote at the beginning of the next chapter. It is, however, firmly rooted in the minds of the majority of the Kandyan Sinhalese and is probably in part due to confusion between Veddas and Kandyans of mixed Vedda descent who until recently called themselves Veddas or were known as Veddas to their neighbours. Many such men living in the Vedirata took care to keep in touch with the

from their coins, held most of the country between the Jumna and the Narbada; and that they ruled as independent princes during the first two centuries of the Christian era" (*loc. cit.*). Mr Vincent Smith points out that the defeat of a Naga chief, Ganapati Naga, is recorded on one of the pillars set up by Samudra Gupta who reigned in the fourth century A.D. (*Early History of India*, 1908, p. 268).

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Veddas, who to some extent looked upon them as chiefs and protectors, and to whom they made presents of game and honey. Another factor leading to the belief in the former glory of the Veddas is the persistence in popular form of the legend of Vijaya and Kuweni, which though absolutely unknown to the Veddas is firmly established among the Sinhalese.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSIONS

IN the first chapter we have given an account of those facts in the history and pre-history of Ceylon which must be taken into account in any investigation of the Veddas, and we referred (p. 27) to the common Sinhalese belief that the Veddas were once rich and powerful. We stated that we could find no adequate reason for this belief, which is held only by the Sinhalese and is dismissed with contempt by all Veddas. It seemed to us that we had said enough on the subject, but the appearance of Mr Parker's recent work, *Ancient Ceylon*, which must always remain authoritative for much which concerns the Island, has persuaded us of the necessity for stating at greater length the reasons for our opinion.

Mr Parker's views on the subject of the former civilisation of the Veddas will be found on pp. 103 to 112 of *Ancient Ceylon*, and we cannot do better than begin our argument by quoting a considerable part of pp. 111 and 112 in which he both states the problem and summarises his views as to its solution.

"In dealing with the position of the Vaeddas, we are faced with this difficulty—that a portion of the race was relatively civilised in ancient times, while certain members of it are found at the present day almost in the state occupied by some of the most primitive peoples. We must adopt a theory which will include all the facts of the case; and not one which ignores some of the most important and significant and incontrovertible historical details and traditions. We cannot select the smallest and wildest group of Vaeddas, and because of their simple life as hunters place the whole race in the position which they con-

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 tinue to occupy...partly by accident and partly of their own free
114 choice.

"My conclusion therefore is that whether there has been any retrogression of the present Forest Vaeddas from a certain low state of civilisation or not, in very early times a great part of the race had reached a much more advanced state of culture than the wilder members of it, whose more or less isolated life either as hunters, or as hunters-and-villagers, did not in many cases induce them to feel any desire to participate in it. This more civilised portion has absorbed the Gangetic settlers, and acquired their status and language, and with some intermixture of Dravidian blood, or in many instances without it, has become the existing Kandian Sinhalese race.

"The ancestors of the present few hunting Vaeddas—who now most probably number much less than one hundred—either abandoned, some centuries after Christ, a form of village life in which they were partly or chiefly hunters, and reverted to the forest life of their forefathers; or, like some of the wild hunting tribes of the South Indian hills, remained, at least until very recent years, in nearly the original condition of the first comers to Ceylon, apparently simply because they preferred the free untrammelled life in the woods, and found their accustomed habits and household articles suited to all the requirements of a hunter's existence in the forests of Ceylon. The evidence afforded by the caves appears to me to be in favour of the former theory, which is also supported by the loss of their original language and their adoption of the Sinhalese tongue.

"The majority, however, of those who did not coalesce with the Gangetic settlers and their descendants, or accept their mode of life and culture, have, in comparatively modern times, and in certain instances partly through compulsion—since portions of the forests in which they were accustomed to hunt have been cu down in order to permit rice and millet cultivation—to some extent adopted the more civilised existence of their neighbours. Many keep buffaloes, and all but those few who live only by hunting and fishing, grow millet and other plants suited to their jungle clearings. An exceptional few in favourable sites for it even cultivate rice, and, as some of them informed me, in recent

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

years have settled down permanently and have planted such fruit trees as Coconuts, Areka-nuts, and Plantains about their houses."

Mr Parker admits such intercourse between the races as is necessary to allow intermarriage and a considerable amount of social contact-metamorphosis, so that we are in complete agreement with him concerning the "majority" of whom he speaks in the last paragraph, and no one will doubt "that in very early times a great part of the race had reached a much more advanced state of culture than the wilder members of it." It therefore only remains to discuss his conclusions concerning those of whom he speaks as the "present Forest Vaeddas."

We hold that there can be little doubt as to which of the two hypotheses put forward by Mr Parker is the correct one, and in spite of the fact that he leans towards the opposite view we shall now proceed to summarise our reasons for believing that the few unsophisticated Veddas of the present day do in fact represent the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon.

In the first place let us consider their physical characters. Experts in comparative anatomy will turn to the work of the Sarasins to estimate for themselves the significance of the primitive osteological characters they describe; it is only necessary here to refer to the more obvious external characters in which the Veddas differ from the Sinhalese. A single glance at the photograph reproduced in Plate III shows that two men in this group differ in general appearance and in their greater stature from their comrades; these two men, as has been mentioned on p. 16, are half-breeds, as are those shown in figure 1 of Plate XIV. The younger man might pass for a Sinhalese and in features closely recalls the Kandyan Sinhalese figured by Deniker[1], who does not at all resemble the relatively broad faced and broad nosed Veddas shown in Plates III, IV, V and VII. Further, among the measurements given in Chapter I the average height of 24 male Veddas measured by the Sarasins is given as 1·55 m. (about 60½ inches), while the average height of 10 Kandyan Sinhalese whom they also measured is 1·61 m. or

[1] *Races of Man*, 1900, p. 416.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

194 about 63½ inches[1]. We may also refer to the measurements of Sinhalese made by M. Emile Deschamps and given in his book 113 *Au Pays des Veddas* (pp. 464 and 465). M. Deschamps has informed us that his measurements were all made on Kandyans, among whom he found that the average height of 16 males was 1·60 m. (about 63 inches) while the average cephalic index of 14 males was 75·9.

On the cultural side the evidence, though less obvious, is, we believe, no less convincing. There is as far as we can ascertain no evidence of there ever having been an organisation into exogamous clans among the Sinhalese, but there is not the least doubt that this exists among the Veddas, among whom it must therefore be considered to have arisen, and we know that this is characteristic of many of the more primitive Jungle (Dravidian) peoples of India[2]. The Vedda cult of the dead must also be looked upon as a primitive and not an adopted feature since it is found among many Indian jungle tribes. There is no need to labour this point since the information given us by Mr Parker and quoted on pp. 14 and 142 indicates, not that the Vedda cult of the dead is derived from Bandar worship, but that this has arisen among the Sinhalese from a cult previously existing in Ceylon. These considerations seem to us to put beyond doubt the fact that the present day Veddas are the lineal descendants in culture as well as in physique of the early (Dravidian) people who inhabited Ceylon, before it was colonised by an Aryan-speaking people, though they do not rebut the "evidence afforded by the caves" (Parker *loc. cit.*) or explain the adoption by the Veddas of the Sinhalese language.

The caves, however, do not seem to us to present any insuperable difficulty. A very small number of caves or rock

[1] We may here quote the opinion of Mr Edgar Thurston who, on looking at a number of photographs of Veddas, made the remark that he should not have known them from photographs of members of a number of Indian Jungle Tribes.

[2] This is not the place to discuss the meaning of the term "Dravidian" or the Dravidian problem; we use the term to signify the short, dark, dolichocephalic peoples of the Deccan. Dr Haddon considers that the Veddas should be classed with the Kurumbas, Irulas and some other Jungle Tribes of the Deccan as pre-Dravidians (*Races of Man*, pp. 7 and 13).

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

shelters have been excavated, and although the drip-ledges and other signs of stone working on those we have ourselves examined indicate that they were inhabited by Sinhalese about 2000 years ago, there are doubtless many others which were not used in this way, and we see no difficulty in believing that when, during the efflorescence of Buddhism, these caves were inhabited by monks, those Veddas who were not drawn within the ever widening circle of Sinhalese influence withdrew to other shelters in the wilder parts of the country, their descendants, who had preserved their independence in the jungle, returning in time to what is now the Vedirata and re-occupying the caves. It was not perhaps necessary for the Veddas to migrate to another part of the country; this at least is Mr Parker's view, who holds that it "is clear that in many instances little establishments of only two or three monks must have occupied the caves on some of the most secluded of these hills, buried in the depths of the dense forests of the wildest parts of the Island. In such sites the aborigines could have regained possession of their caves with ease and impunity, and with practically no fear of punishment by the Sinhalese authorities. In the histories also, there is no hint of any quarrels with the natives after the time when Pandukabhaya became king[1]."

We believe that there is nothing *a priori* improbable in these views, and the records of "wild" Veddas all through historic times show that there was always some part of the country so thinly settled as to allow them to persist as a jungle tribe.

We come now to the question of language. Mr Parker's translations of the invocations we collected, and Mr Gunasekara's examination of our vocabularies and songs, indicate that no trace of the old Vedda language has survived. This does not, however, prove that the Veddas who were the ancestors of the present "wild" Veddas were a highly civilised race who had adopted all the customs of their Aryan-speaking neighbours; it is generally admitted that a people may adopt a foreign language while retaining its old customs and without greatly altering its old method of life.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 31.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

The case of the Bhumij of Western Bengal is particularly illuminating. "Here a pure Dravidian race have lost their original language and now speak only Bengali. They still retain a set of totemistic exogamous sub-divisions closely resembling those of the Mundas and the Santals. But they are beginning to forget the totems which the names of the sub-divisions denote, and the names themselves will probably soon be abandoned in favour of more aristocratic designations. The tribe will then have become a caste in the full sense of the word, and will go on stripping itself of all customs likely to betray its true descent. The physical characteristics of its members will alone survive[1]." Further, "some of the leading men of the tribe, who call themselves Bhuinhars, and hold large landed tenures on terms of police service, have set up as Rajputs, and keep a low class of Brahmans as their family priests. They have, as a rule, borrowed the Rajput class titles, but cannot conform with the Rajput rules of intermarriage, and marry within a narrow circle of pseudo-Rajputs like themselves[2]." The rest of the tribe, numbering at the last census 370, 239, are divided into a number of exogamous groups, which include the Sabusi (*sal* fish), the Hansda (wild goose), the Lang (mushroom), Sandiliya (a bird) and Hemron (areca palm) clans.

Mr Parker (*op. cit.* p. 96) lays some stress on "the fact" that the Veddas "understand and use" the "classical expression" Nirindu "chief of men" which occurs in an invocation (Chapter X, No 16) we obtained from the Veddas of Sitala Wanniya. We may perhaps point out that very many expressions occur in the invocations given in Chapter X which the Veddas do not understand at all, or to which they attach a secondary and incorrect meaning. That the expression is classical and is "never employed in modern colloquial Sinhalese" is not surprising, for as we have shown in Chapter XV the time at which the Veddas gave up their own language and assumed the Sinhalese is relatively remote, so that their charms and invocations may reasonably be expected to contain archaic expressions. We may also refer to the passage (already quoted on p. 417) from Mr Parker's

[1] H. H. Risley, *People of India*, p. 74.

[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 94, 95

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

work in which he speaks of the existence of small and scattered Buddhist establishments in the midst of the jungle in which the Veddas still lived. We can imagine no condition more favourable for the passage of classical expressions and formulae into the Vedda language and religion. 174

The use of rice and coconuts in the offerings to the *yaku* also demands discussion. We have shown that many of the *yaku* ceremonies are essentially acts of communion uniting the living with the spirits of the dead, and we have hinted our belief that the reason for rice and coconut being almost essential parts of the offering is that they are the foods of which the Veddas are especially fond and which they regard as great delicacies. It is, however, obvious that there might be another reason for the almost constant offering of these foods; if we regard the Veddas as having fallen from a higher state in which they were cultivators then the necessity of offering just these foods to the *yaku* would be a survival from the times when rice and coconuts were offered by the civilised ancestors of the present day Veddas.

This period might theoretically coincide either with the time referred to in the Mahawansa when equal thrones were set up at Anuradhapura by king Pandukabhaya for himself and "the yakkha chief Citta[1]," or it might have been long before the time of the conquest of Ceylon by the northern invaders, in which event it must be assumed that the Veddas learnt to cultivate rice and to grow coconuts from the Nagas or some other immigrant race.

Concerning these two possibilities we can only say that we have already on pp. 9 and 10 stated our views as to the significance of the elevation of the chief Citta and the political organization of his followers. With regard to the possible origin of the offerings of rice and coconut in the times before the invasion, the Nagas doubtless exercised some influence on the aborigines among whom they settled, yet there is every reason to believe that outside Nagadipa, this influence was not widely spread throughout the Island, at least in any developed form.

The Mahawansa differentiates very clearly between Nagas

[1] *Op. cit.* Ch. x, p. 43.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

●174 and Yakkas and the conditions it chronicles at the conquest seem to us to indicate the existence of a wild jungle people such as we know existed at the time when Europeans first came in contact with the Sinhalese.

We take this opportunity of alluding to the following literary evidence which shows the existence of a jungle people in Ceylon in the 4th, 7th, and 11th centuries.

Tennant has drawn attention to the treatise *De Moribus Brachmanorum* written in the 4th century A.D. and ascribed to Palladius. In this the author cites the account of the Βεσαδες given him by a Theban scholar who, having failed to prosper as an advocate, had turned traveller and explorer. The Theban stated that "when in Ceylon, he obtained pepper from the Besadae, and succeeded in getting so near them as to be able to describe accurately their appearance, their low stature and feeble configuration, their large heads and shaggy uncut hair—a description which in every particular agrees with the aspect of the Veddahs at the present day. His expression that he succeeded in 'getting near' them, ἔφθασα ἐγγὺς τῶν καλουμένων Βεσάδων, shows their propensity to conceal themselves even when bringing the articles which they had collected in the woods to sell[1]."

Further information concerning the Βεσαδες is given by the Sarasins (*op. cit.* pp. 578, 579) who used the Greek account in the edition of Bissaeus, ignoring the poor translation of this into Latin which Bissaeus also gives. The Theban relates "that having fallen in with some Indian trading boats which were crossing over (to Ceylon) from Axume, he sought to penetrate further into the interior (of the Island) and suddenly arrived in the vicinity of the so-called Βιθεσαδες (in this place written Θηβαιδες, doubtless in error) who gather pepper. But this people is by far the smallest and weakest, they live in rock-caves, and know how to climb over the most intricately massed rocks and thus gather pepper from the bushes; for these are small trees as the scholar informs us.....

"The Βιθεσαδες are little men, with large heads and long and

[1] Tennant, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 593 n.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

straight hair; whereas on the other hand the others, the negros (Ethiopians) and the Indians, are black and powerful, and curly haired. There, he says, I was stopped by the one in power (δυναστεύων) and asked about my business and how I dared to force my way into their land; and while they could not accept my explanation because they did not understand our language, I could not understand their questions because I did not know theirs.....Their loud voices, their bloodshot eyes, and the savage gnashing of their teeth inspired me with fear.....Held captive.....I.....did them service, the task of cooking being allotted to me."

References in Arabic and Chinese writers have also been collected by Tennant, who notes (*op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 272 n.) that in the 7th century the Chinese traveller Hioueng Thsang remarked that the "Yakkhos" had retreated to the south-east part of Ceylon, while in the first half of the 11th century the Arabic geographer, Alberuni, described the "silent trade" as carried on with the *ginn* or, according to others, with men who were absolute savages.

We have already cited passages which show that there were Veddas living a free life in the jungle in the 17th century, and it can scarcely be suggested that between the 12th and 17th centuries the Veddas ceased to lead this sort of life and for a time adopted the civilisation of the Sinhalese to again lapse into wild life in the jungle about the time that European influence began to be felt in the Island.

There is one matter which seems to us more difficult to understand than any other, and which, if the Veddas had not kept up their division into exogamous clans, it would be difficult to explain otherwise than by their having at one time adopted Sinhalese habits and customs and having later reverted to a wandering jungle life. We refer to their terms of relationship which, as already set forth in Chapter III, are identical with those employed by the Sinhalese. We consider that this must be accounted for in the same way as the assumption by the Veddas of an Aryan language, and that the factors which determined this at the same time led to the adoption of the Aryan terms of relationship.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

●174 In conclusion we may state our opinion of the relationship of the Veddas to the jungle tribes of India and to the civilised races of Ceylon. We regard them as part of the same race as the so-called Dravidian jungle tribes of Southern India. Perhaps the few surviving "wild" Veddas have altered less socially than the people of the Indian jungle groups, and are therefore to be regarded as more primitive than these, but even this is and must remain uncertain until we know more of the social life of the Indian jungle tribes. Turning to the historic races of the Island, we believe that the Kandyans and indeed all the "up country" Sinhalese have absorbed a considerable amount of Vedda blood, and that their customs have been influenced by the Veddas, who, in turn, have learned to speak an Aryan language. The Tamils do not appear to owe anything to the Veddas, though the religion of those Veddas who live in or near the Tamil zone has been influenced by the latter.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

those only who are the most barbarous, who have preserved in all essentials their isolation from other races intact, that we must expect to find the most marked peculiarities.

The term Veddah—or Weddah—in itself, indicates no particular race. It simply means "a hunter", and is, in India, applied to aboriginal or barbarous tribes generally.*

In this sense, a great portion of the population of the eastern parts of Ceylon appears, at some period or another, to have been so called. There are still extensive districts known as "Weddirata", or the country of the Veddahs, the inhabitants of which, although they are, owing to the remoteness of their situation, less civilized than the bulk of the people of the island, are not Veddahs, but Singhalese, in kindred, religion, and customs.

It is highly probable that the people of these remote districts and of others, where Veddah descent is still claimed, are more directly derived from the race which originally stocked the island than those who inhabit such parts of it as were more accessible to the settlers from Continental India, who, in process of time superseded the aborigines.†

But the people distinguished in Ceylon, by the name of Veddahs—wholly distinct, as I have said, even from those who, though now Singhalese, yet describe themselves as descended from Veddah ancestors, are to be found in the districts of Batti-

---

* Weddâ (Singhalese) an archer; some trace it to Bedda (Jungle). Introduction to Alwis' Sidath Sangarawa.

Vedâa (Tamil), a hunter—one who lives in the woods; a name given to rude tribes, aborigines in the Indian peninsula. Vedan (Tamil), corruptly Vaidan, Veddah, also Beddah, or Weden—a hunter, a fowler; a name given to wild tribes, inhabiting the hills and forests of the south of India almost in a state of nature—probably the aboriginal race of the peninsula. Prof. Wilson's *Glossary of Revenue and Judicial Terms*. The word Veddah is still used in Ceylon as a hunter, and so applied to persons, not "Veddah" in the limited sense of the word.

† The Weddirates were, under the native government, exempted from all service save military—the most honourable; and rendered tribute to the king, of beeswax, dried flesh, and honey, which was continued for some time after we obtained possession of the Kandyan provinces. But the inhabitants of these districts marry and associate with those of the adjoining districts, and are apparently the same people. There may exist some ethnical difference; indeed, I think even an unscientific eye can detect a difference in the appearance, not only of these people, but of the Wanniahs of the northern and central parts of Ceylon, when compared with the ordinary natives. I have tried to obtain skulls of the different races, of which there are many in the island, viz., Tamils, Moors, Singhalese of the low country and of the Kandyan provinces, the people of the Weddirates—Wanniahs of Newerakalawiya and Batticaloa—Mookwas of the north-west and east provinces, Malays, Cocrowas, Rhodias, etc., but it is most difficult to obtain them. The subject may be worthy of the attention of the Ethnological Society, though beside the object of this paper.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca, 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

no idols, offer no sacrifices, and pour no libations. They cannot 782
be said to have any temples, for the few sticks sometimes erected, 776
with a branch thrown over them, are, I imagine, simply to pro- [346]
tect their votive offerings.

They have no system of medicine, though they will accept medi- 755
cine when given. In cases of sickness they sprinkle water on the 769
patient, invoking their deceased ancestors to heal him. Some-
times they simply utter the name of spirits as they dance round
the sick man. Sometimes a garland of flowers is offered to the
spirit who has afflicted him.* They believe in the efficacy of
what are called devil dances, but are ignorant of the art of a
Kattadia, or devil dancer. I can find no trace of metempsychosis, [775]
so universal amongst Buddhists.

I have now described what is the *actual* religious belief, if it 771
can be so called, of the Veddahs; and it was only by dint of often 774
repeated visits among them, and very careful inquiry, that I suc-
ceeded in obtaining the particulars I have recorded.

But, that at some period of their history they had some know-
ledge of a more "systematized" faith, their charms and invoca-
tions, some of their customs, and the very names they bear, seem
conclusively to prove.

Such testimony is invaluable. For neither the inquirer, whose
zeal may induce him to jump too hastily at conclusions, nor the
people themselves, can distort it, or give it a strained interpreta-
tion. But this evidence all points to something long past, to
a faith once, at least, familiar to them, but now forgotten. At
the least, it indicates a former contact with civilization, and
proves that they have a history more full of incident than would
belong to a race which was always as barbarous as it is now.†

In their charms the sun and moon are frequently invoked, [821]
although in their daily life neither luminary is respected.‡

---

* They invoke the Gal-Yakko, spirit of the rock; Weldo-Yakko, spirit of the chase; Oonapána-Yakko, of whom I have no knowledge; and the shade of their great-grandmother. They also propitiate "Maha-Yakkhini" who appears rather an evil personage. It is to her that they offer a garland of flowers. They describe her as a "foreigner", and say that they know nothing about her, but acquired their awe of her from the Singhalese. The Weddi-Yakko is known to the Singhalese; hunters offer flowers, blood, and burnt meat to this spirit, before hunting, to secure their success: Oonapána-Yakko is known to the Singhalese of the Weddirates, but I do not think he is generally known to the Singhalese.

† Vide Tennent's account of the Veddahs, especially vol. ii, part iii, chap. ix, p. 441-2. "They have no knowledge of a God, nor of a future state, no temples, no altars, prayers, or charms; in short, no 'instinct of worship' except, it is reported, some ceremonies analogous to devil worship."

‡ This occurs in several charms. The following (which, though not 789
known to the Singhalese, as applied to *wild boars*, is identical with one known to them to drive away toothache), not only invokes the sun and moon,

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

fact, neither scruple is now a religious one with them. Their aversion to beef and fowls is an hereditary prejudice, now become a custom amongst them. 262 171

The names borne by many of them are the designations of Hindú gods and goddesses. It seems clear then, that these Hindú customs and prejudices—these Hindú names, which we find still lingering amongst a people which does not profess that faith, and for twenty centuries have been far removed from those who do, indicate either that the Veddahs once professed it, or lived in the closest intercourse with those who did.* 551 171 [174]

The complicated and artificial ceremonial of that religion has naturally died away during the long ages of isolation in which the Veddahs have lived; the vestiges of its former existence among them have been preserved only in some of its strongest prejudices, and in the names derived from the Hindú mythology which have descended as customary family designations to the Veddahs of the present day.†

I should hardly say that the cock is "respected" in the neighbourhood of Katagam; but fowls are rarely eaten by the people there, who, if they eat them, must undergo a course of purification. A fowl curry involves the necessity of an ablution of the head with limes and saffron. Peafowls, too, are rejected as an article of food in that part of the island, for a peacock is represented as the vehicle of the gods: of all this, however, and of the existence of Skanda or of Katragam, the Veddahs are profoundly ignorant. The names of Skanda are common appellations among Veddah men, and that of Valli, Skanda's consort, a common name for Veddah women. 171

* Let it be remembered that the Veddahs, of whom I am writing, have never had any communication with the Tamil-speaking Veddahs who inhabit the seacoast of the Batticaloa district, who are in direct contiguity with Hindús. [The inference drawn is not warranted by the fact referred to. The Hindús occasionally have names taken from those of foreign languages. Thus the Regent of Nepal, a pure and high-caste Hindú, bore a name consisting of two Persian words. Edit.]

† It was not for years after I had collected this information regarding the superstitions of the Veddahs, that I read the Laws of Menu. It is impossible not to be struck with the similarity, if not identity, of their rude worship and its precepts; *e.g.*

"72. But whoever cherishes not the five orders of beings—those who demand hospitality—those whom he ought to maintain—*his departed forefathers* and himself—that man lives not, even though he breathes."

The Brahman is ordered to make an oblation every day to the following divinities, viz.:—

"First to Agni, *god of fire*, and to the *lunar god*;".... to the "*goddess of the day*";.... the *goddess of the earth and sky*"; to the "*winds*" and "*water gods*"; the "*gods of large trees*"; to the spirits "*that walk in light*", and those "*who walk in darkness.*" The reverence of deceased ancestors is then insisted on. "The Pitris, or great progenitors, are free from all wrath—intent on purity—even exempt from sensual passions—endued with exalted qualities."

"The divine Manes are always pleased with an oblation *in empty glades*,

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

171 But what is Hindú is, so to speak, the *dead* part of their religious belief. What is in daily practice, bears the closest resemblance to the NÂt worship of the aboriginal tribes of India.*

I have, in the preceding pages, faithfully recorded the habits, customs, and superstitions of the "wilder sort" of the Veddahs. 184 To have discussed the "tamer sort," or those who, for a considerable period, have maintained intercourse with the Singhalese or people of the country, would have been a mere waste of time; or to have considered them in connection with their more barbarous brethren would have been to have fallen into the very error, which has marred the exceedingly interesting notice of the aboriginal race of Ceylon, which Tennent has given us. It would have been like weaving a woof of bleached and unbleached threads, so intermingled and complicated that a clear perception of either were impossible. I have confined myself, therefore, exclusively to the most barbarous specimens of the race, for wild as the wildest of the Batticalao district are, they are less barbarous than these.

I now propose to consider the evidence I have collected, with a 174 view to fixing the ethnical origin of these Veddahs. I have shewn that the term "Veddah" has no distinctive signification—that it may be, and is applied to barbarous races generally, who depend on hunting for their support, and hence, to the wild tribes in India, who are supposed to be the aborigines of the country.

It has always been assumed, that the Veddahs of Ceylon are the descendants of the race which originally peopled the island, or, at any rate, of that which inhabited it prior to its conquest and colonization by Wijaya and his followers.† Of this, there can be

---

naturally clean, on the banks of rivers, and in solitary spots." Sir William Jones's works.

* A paper "On the Veddahs of Bintenne", by the Rev. J. Gillings, was published in the Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1853. Mr. Gilling's paper treats of the Veddahs inhabiting that portion of Bintenne which is in the district of Batticalon, and it shews how materially they differ from the Veddahs of Nigala and the Badulla Bintenne, whom I have just described. He states that they have intermarried with the Singhalese, with whom they are "mixed up to a large extent"—that "adultery and polygamy are still common among them"—that "theft and lying are prevalent"; and he speaks of divorce as habitual. The absence of these practices among the Veddahs of the Badulla district is clearly to be accounted for by the greater isolation in which they have lived.

† Nothing can be more charming than that portion of Tennent's work in which he undertakes the proof that they are the descendants of the Yakkhos, as the Buddhistical writers termed the aborigines. And we may well forgive him for giving way to the temptation of reviving exploded customs, and discussing them in the present tense, in order to prove that the habits of the Veddahs, in the year of grace 1860, are identical with those of the Beesdæ, in A.D. 400; for there can be no doubt that, about a century ago

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

little doubt; and if additional proof were needed, I may add the curious fact, that there is probably at this moment—there certainly was in 1855—in use among the Veddahs, one at least of the few Yakkho names, mentioned in the Mahawanso. For in the name, Pusamittya—unknown among the Singhalese—we have no difficulty in recognising the designation of that Yakkho princess, whose wedding festivities afforded to Kuweni a fitting opportunity for the execution of her treacherous scheme for the establishment of Wijaya's power, by the slaughter of her own countrymen.*

Tennent argues that the aborigines of Ceylon were probably a branch of the same stock which colonized the Dekkan, both on account of the similarity of the demon worship, said to be practised by them, with the superstitions found among the wild tribes, who undoubtedly represent the aboriginal race of the Peninsula; and on account of the affinity of Singhalese with the group of languages still in use in the Dekkan, a fact fully and clearly established by the labours of Mr. Ellis of Madras.

Though the results of my own careful and personal inquiries into the customs and superstitions of the Veddahs, do not disclose actual demon worship, they establish, I think, their identity with those of many of the hill tribes of India, and fully justify the assumption of the common origin of the people. It is true, that the customs of all barbarous races must closely resemble each other, being alike derived in so many instances from the objects of nature, common to all whose home is the forest and the mountain.

But in the worship of their departed ancestors, and the spirits of the dead, the belief in the nameless genii of the rocks and rivers, of the hills and trees and forests; the invocation of the sun and moon; the absence of idolatry; the abhorrence of polygamy; the absence of divorce, or separation; the equality of rank; the value attached to the bow, arrow, and hunting-dog; the offerings to the God of the chase, and the charms to protect them from wild beasts, the Veddahs of Ceylon and many of the

perhaps, the peculiarities mentioned by the ancient travellers did exist among the Veddahs of Ceylon.

* "Thereupon she, being desirous of conferring the whole sovereignty on her lord, replied.... In the city Siriwattha, in this island, is a Yakkho sovereign (Kalaseno), and in the Yakkho city (Lankapura) there is another sovereign. Having conducted his daughter (*Pusamitta*) thither, her mother (Kondanamika) is now bestowing that daughter at a marriage festival on the sovereign there..... Such an assemblage will not occur again. Lord! this very day extirpate the Yakkhos." Turnour's *Mahawanso*, chap. viii, p. 47. Vide also Tennent's remarks on the historical value of this ancient chronicle, and Turnour's introduction to his valuable translation of the work.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

●174 wild tribes of India are identical: the points of resemblance are too close to be mere fortuitous coincidences.*

* See the accounts of wild tribes of India in the Journals of the Royal Asiatic Society; of the Bengal Asiatic Society; and of that of Singapore. But especially see the account of the Khonds, one of the Pulindas, or wild tribes of Orissa, by Capt. MacPherson, vol. vii, Journal Royal Asiatic Soc. They worship the sun and moon, the spirits of hills, of stones, and of forests. They propitiate the god of the chase with ceremonies not unlike those of the Veddahs, the weapons of the hunter bearing a prominent part in them. Can the "Bulenda Silenda", classified among their local divinities, of which unfortunately no particulars are given, have any relation to the "Bilinda" or "Bilindoo" of the Veddahs? It is worthy of note that the language of Uriya or Orissa is said to bear a marked resemblance to the Singhalese.

See also an account of the Puttuwas or Juanguas, who inhabit certain of the tributary Mehals of Cuttack, by Mr. Samuels of the Bengal civil service. Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society, 1846. They resemble the Veddahs, apparently, in pursuits, in the absence of distinction of rank, of idolatry, and of priesthood, in their homage to "nameless spirits, which they believe inhabit the woods and mountains", in their worship of deceased ancestors and prayers for protection from wild beasts. See also the notices of the tribes of Northern Cachar. The Meekirs "worship the sun and moon, and large rocks, and trees in the forest, which they consider the abiding places of unknown and invisible deities." Among the Kookies, "a deity exists in every tree", and polygamy is forbidden. See also the *Tumulian* tribes in the valley of Assam, described by Mr. Hodgson in the Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society, 1849. "The Koochs sacrifice to the sun, moon, and stars, to the gods of the rivers, hills, and woods", and "to deceased parents, though they believe not in a future state." The religion of the Bodo and Dhimal is "the natural religion of man, viz. the worship of the most striking and influential of sensible objects, of the starry host, of the terrene elements." They have river gods, forest gods, mountain gods, sun, moon, earth, old gods, and young gods (see a former note on the Veddah's Bilindoo and Witera Yakkoon). Vide also the accounts of the Mechs, and other tribes. In the Tenesserim provinces, adjoining Pegu and Siam, there exists among the aboriginal races the same Nat or spirit-worship. The same worship prevails among the hill tribes between Burmah and Arracan. The Rev. S. Hobbs, formerly a missionary at Tinnevelly, has given me some interesting particulars of a hill tribe, calling themselves, and called by the natives round them, "Mâle arasars", "mountain kings", or simply "arasars", "kings"; among whom he long laboured. They inhabit the hills bordering on the Travancore territory, and in many instances they greatly resemble the Veddahs. See the account of the Hill Arrians residing to the eastward of Cottayam, in the Madras Church Missionary Record, June 1860, who "worship the spirits of their ancestors, and certain local deities supposed to reside in most of the high peaks and rugged rocks." The chastity of their women is another point of resemblance, and their love of truth. See the same publication for January 1862, report by the Rev. J. G. Beüttle. He speaks of "various hill tribes who, though standing in no relationship whatever with the Arrians, yet, like them, call themselves the 'Lords of the Hills'; addressing any one that comes within their reach 'thou'." They subsist on roots, honey, and the produce of the chase. They belong to Travancore. See also the Church Missionary Record for June 1861. The Rev. F. N. Alexander's report on the Koi mission, in which mention is made of the Kois who "worship the spirits of the mountains",

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

174

The Veddahs, then, are descended from Yakkhos, or aborigines of Ceylon, who were of the same stock, *i. e.* Tamulian, as the aborigines of the Dekkan—a race not Brahminical in faith, nor Sanscrit in speech.* But if, as Tennent believes, the Veddahs are a mere remnant of this ancient race, which fled before the advance of Wijaya and his followers, never blending with the invaders, as the bulk of the aboriginal population undoubtedly did, we should find among them now—for they have never to this day mixed with the people of the country—only such characteristics as would belong to the savage tribes to which they are allied, and as would be indicative of a state of barbarism, from which they had never emerged.

Assuredly, we should *not* find marked traces of the Brahminical faith—direct allusions to the Hindú gods and well-known personages in the Puranas—names still in use in Bengal, but unknown in Ceylon, neither Tamil nor Singhalese, but Sanscrit, the language of the Aryans.

All this seems to prove that at some period of their history they were in close and intimate communication with the Sanscrit-speaking Brahminical race of Bengal. Yet we know they are the descendants of the rude Tamulian aborigines.

Whence came these Hindú customs and these Hindú names? Not from contact with, or contiguity to, Hindú races; for the surrounding people, in whose neighbourhood they have lived for centuries, are Buddhist; and there is not even a trace of Buddhism to be found among them.

Whence arose that obstinate love of isolation which has kept them aloof even from those of undoubted Veddah descent? Why do these naked savages affect to look down upon the civilized Singhalese? And, lastly, whence did they derive that remarkable custom which sanctioned the marriage of a man with his younger sister—that strange tradition that they are the descendants of kings?

A glance at the early history of Ceylon will, I think, throw a

---

and call themselves "Doralu", "lords", and their women "Dorasánalu", "ladies", etc. I wish to add here that, at the time I noted down the customs and superstitions of the Veddahs, I had never seen any account of the wild tribes of India. Vide remarks at p. 304, with regard to the names of Skanda and his consort—favourite deities with the Veddahs of India, though unknown to the Veddahs of Ceylon.

* "The Tamulians include the whole of the aborigines of India, whether civilised or uncivilised, from Cape Comorin to the snows, except the inhabitants of the great mountain belt confining the plains of India, towards Thibet, China, and Ava, which are derived from the Thibetan and Indo-Chinese stock." Hodgson on the Aborigines of North Eastern India, Bengal Asiatic Society's Journal, 1849.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

● 174 light on this part of the subject. The following is abbreviated from the Mahawanso:—

The King of Wangu* had a beautiful daughter, of whom it was predicted that she should wed a lion, which accordingly came to pass. By her lion-husband she had twins, a son and daughter, named, from their paternal origin, Siha-bahov and Siha-si-wali. The son, when he was sixteen, began to weary of the paternal den, and contrived one day, when his father was out hunting, to escape from it, with his mother on one shoulder, and his sister on the other. The bereaved lion was inconsolable; he neither ate nor drank, and laid waste the country round, in testimony of his grief. The "government" of Wangu (the king appears to have been dead) offered a reward for his death; and Siha-bahov, more patriotic than dutiful, or more mercenary than either, had the satisfaction of presenting the head of his father to the subjects of his grandfather, whose "virtuous ministers, exulting in the exploit, with one accord made him king;" but he preferred the "land of his nativity, the forests of Lala," where he founded the city of Siha-pura, and, marrying his sister, Siha-si-wali, he reigned as king of that country. His wife brought him twins sixteen times! The eldest of the family was Wijaya.

Wijaya appears to have led rather a "fast life," and turned out "a very lawless character," so much so that the people complained to his father. At last, they clamoured for his execution; and the king, first compelling him and each of his seven hundred companions to have half the beard and head shaved, put them on boardship, and turned them adrift without oars or sails.

They drifted to Ceylon, and landed, B.C. 543, on the north-west coast, near Putlaw, where marrying Kuweni, a Yakkho chieftainess, he acquired, by her means, a footing in the island. She betrayed into his hands her own countrymen, the chief of whom he put to death, and, founding the city of Tamana Nuwera,† he assumed the title of king. Having made use of Kuweni to establish his power, he, with a heartlessness worthy of modern times, deserted her for a more advantageous alliance. The repudiated wife protested against being forced to seek a refuge among her own countrymen, but she had served Wijaya's purpose, and he left her to her fate. In despair, she, with the son and daughter

* In the Valley of the Ganges.

† Vide Mr. Cagie Chitty's paper on the "Ruins of Tamana Nuwera," in the sixth volume of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. A local tradition, which represented Wijaya to have landed on a point of land called Tundamuni, a little east of Putlam, was verified by the discovery by the late Mr. Caulfeild, of the Ceylon Civil Service, of the ruins of Tamana Nuwera on the east bank of the Mee-oya, in the forest Kandukalliwall. There is a Tank near still called Tamanavilla.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

she had borne him, Jiwahalto and Disala, sought a home in Lankápura, that city of her own people which she had betrayed into the hands of Wijaya.* 174●

But her treachery had not been forgotten; she was instantly put to death, and her children were only saved from a similar fate by the intervention of their maternal uncle, Kumaro, with whom they escaped to "the neighbourhood of the Sumanta mountain," *i.e.*, the country near Adam's peak, and "the elder having grown up married his sister," according to the custom of his father's royal race—a custom afterwards recognized in the Singhalese royal families,† "and settled there, becoming numerous by their sons and daughters, under the protection of the king they resided there, retaining the attributes of the Yakkho," that is relapsing from the more civilized habits of the Hindu invaders, with whom on their father's side they were so closely allied, into the wild life of their maternal ancestors, the untamed aborigines of the island.‡

There, then, amidst the mountains, far removed from the scene of their mother's treachery, brief triumph and death—the children of Wijaya the Indian conqueror and Kuweni the native chieftainess found a refuge, separated from their mother's justly incensed people by upwards of a hundred miles of dense forest, and beyond the reach of their father's followers, now estranged from them, if not hostile too.

There they founded a wild race, condemned as it were from its very origin to barbarism, which was known by the name of Pulindah,§ and there can still be traced the vestiges of their wandering life, and there still exists the tradition that the country once was peopled by Veddahs, who gradually retired towards Bintenne and Wellassé.‖

---

* See a former note.

† Only, however, when no other suitable alliance was procurable. This practice was sanctioned among the ancient Egyptians and Persians. Atopa, daughter of Cyrus, married, first, her own brother Cambyses. The Peruvian Incas married their sisters; but the practice was confined to royalty.

‡ The extracts quoted above are from Turnour's *Mahawanso*. The following is a literal translation of the same passage, in the copy of the *Mahawanso*, in the Asgiria Wihaase in Kandy:—"They repaired to the rock Sumanta kooba; and being permitted by king Wijaya to dwell there, they became man and wife, and had children and grandchildren. Thus, a wansiya (a race) sprung up, called Pulindah."

§ Vide note at page 185 of Wilson's Vishnu Purana. "Pulinda is applied to any wild or barbarous tribe;" and they are met with in the deserts along the Indus, the mountains and forests across Central India. What more natural than that Wijaya's followers and descendants should give the same terms to the wild tribes here? Pulinda, one of the fifty-six countries of the Hindu geography.

‖ Wellassé, in the district of Badulla. Nilgala is a subdivision of Wellassé.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 I have said that the Veddahs have but one tradition of their origin, that they are descended from kings. I have described that peculiar custom which not only sanctions but prescribes, as the most fitting of alliances, the marriage of a brother with his younger sister. This tradition prevails, and this custom obtains, or did obtain, amongst all the tribes of wild Veddahs which I have endeavoured to describe, tribes absolutely illiterate, in the lowest depth of ignorance, utterly unknown to each other, as effectually severed by the intervening hills and forests as if the Atlantic were spread between their hunting grounds.

The bare assertion by a naked savage in the rudest state of barbarism that he is the descendant of kings, seems, at first, a sheer absurdity, though it naturally suggests the inquiry how the claim to so ambitious an origin could have arisen, and having arisen, how it should be so pertinaciously adhered to by tribes unknown to each other.

The custom which sanctions such revolting marriages seems, at first sight, simply a proof of the extreme depth of barbarism to which the race has sunk. But when we consider the tradition in connection with the fact that the Singhalese invariably admit the Veddahs to be of the highest caste, while they in turn affect to look down upon the Singhalese; and when we regard the custom in connection with the story of the marriage of the son and daughter of Wijaya, himself the offspring of a similar connection; when we read the legend of their flight from both father's and mother's kindred to the forests, where, resuming the wild life of their maternal ancestors, they founded a wild race; when we find even yet the district which tradition gives as their refuge, still called by a name indicative of their former existence in it, and still abounding with traces of them—though not a Veddah can be remembered there; and when we can trace among the Veddahs of the present day the remains of Brahmanism—Wijaya's creed—intermingled with the Nât worship, practised by Kuweni's nation; and when there are still in use among them names of Sanskrit affinity, common in India, though, rare among themselves, unknown in Ceylon; it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the wild tribes of the Veddahs are not the "mere remnants of the untamed aborigines," but the descendants of the ill-fated Kuweni and the faithless Wijaya; that they are indeed, as they profess themselves, "the descendants of kings."*

* I arrived at this conclusion by the process I have described, the fact, if it be a fact, gradually dawning on me as I continued my investigations. I was very glad to find my theory corroborated in Mr. De Blur's *Sidath Sangarawa*, which I saw for the first time in May 1860. In the Introduction, p. viii, he says—"Hence, it is by no means improbable, nor therefore

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

Why or when they abandoned their sanctuary in the Sumanto mountains* who can tell? Probably, as Tennent says, of "a large section of the natives," they, with too good reason, fled before the advance of the Indian adventurers, at once their kindred and their foes,† and withdrew into the forests and hunting grounds in the south-east of the island."

174

unreasonable to suppose, that the limited number of Wijaya's followers, by intermarriage with the more favoured (Yakko) natives, became united into one nation; while the less favoured betook themselves to the utmost recesses of the jungle, where they settled themselves as a distinct tribe of Singhalese, now known as Veddahs. For, *without tracing the Veddahs to the descendants of the natural children of Wijaya*, or to a very small portion of the (Yakko) aborigines of this island, it is difficult to assign to them an origin common with the amalgamated race of Singhalese."

The Kols, a wild tribe in the district of Kilore in Southern India, give an account of their own origin, not unlike that which I attribute to the Veddahs. They say they are descended from Beemadu, brother of Dharma Raja, who had an intrigue with a wild woman of the woods, and that they are sprung from the fruit of this connection (*Madras Church Missionary Record*, June 1861). Beemadu was (in Hindú mythology) one of the five brothers of Dharma Raja, the Hindú Pluto, and (in history) one of the five sons of Pándu, king of the Cúrú tribe, near Delhi.

* Percival says, chap. xiii,—"Those bordering on the district of Jaffnapalatm" (probably Wanniahs are here meant), "and the tribes who inhabit the west and north-west quarters of the island, *between Adam's Peak and the Raygam and Pasdoon Korles*, are the only Bedahs who have been seen by Europeans, and are much less wild and ferocious than those who live in the forests of Bintan." I cannot ascertain Percival's authority for Veddahs having been in these districts so recently. I have made careful inquiries, both in these Korles and the district of Saffragam; and though traces of their former existence there are evident and numerous, there is every reason to believe that many centuries have passed since they were there. Fields, villages, and families yet retain the name of Veddahs, as Weddeya pangoo, Wedde coombore, Wedde watte, Wedde ella, Wedde gala, Weddegé, etc., in the district of Saffragam, which is the country at the foot of Adam's Peak, and in the Raygam Korle. Indeed, Saffragam, or Habara gamowa, means the district of Veddahs, or barbarous people; and in this form of the word, the former existence of Veddahs again can be traced, as Habara goddegé, Habara kadowa, etc. It is traditional throughout Saffragam, that once Veddahs predominated over Singhalese in that district, and that, as the latter gained ground, the former withdrew towards Bintenu and Wellassé. But Mr. Macready, of the Civil Service, has given me very important proof of the existence of Veddahs "near the Sumanta mountains." He has given me the translation of some stanzas from a Singhalese poem, written about 400 years ago, called the Pirawi Sandese, or the Dove's Message. The poem treats of a message sent, by means of a dove, from Cotta (near Colombo) to Vishnu at Dondera, at the extreme south of the island. The dove takes its course exactly over the districts lying below Adam's Peak. The poet addresses the dove, and tells her she will see "the daughters of the Veddahs" clothed in Riti bark, their hair adorned with peacock's plumes. So wild are they that the poet describes the herds of deer as being startled at the sight of them.

† Tennent makes an unaccountable mistake when he says, vol. I, chap.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca, 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 That the bulk of the aborigines amalgamated with their conquerors, and became one people with them, there is ample proof; but the race of Kuweni probably held aloof from all. She, betraying and betrayed, met her doom on the scene of her treachery.* Her children and immediate kinsfolk, outcasts both from the conquering and conquered races, fled to the forests. A life of isolation was to them not a matter of choice but of necessity. In their seclusion they naturally retained, with the superstition of their mother's people, some remnant of their father's faith, with which they must have been in some degree familiar. They preserved the high-sounding names of India, and, with the pride of rank, adhered to the custom of the marriage of a brother with his younger sister, which was not only the practice of their father's family, but a mark of their royal blood.

Such is the story of the Veddaha. And if my theory be correct it adds a curious chapter to the history of Ceylon.

SPECIMEN OF VEDDAH DIALECT.

(*Vowels to be pronounced as in Italian.*)

192
197

English.	Veddah.	Singhalese.	Remarks.
The sun	Irra podja	Ira	"Podja", probably a corruption of podiya (Singhalese), a small thing.
The moon	Pāna podja	Handa	Pāna (Singh.), a lamp. Handa pāna (Singh.) moonlight.
The stars	Tarčoka gajja	Tarakāwa	"Gajja", probably a corruption of sediya (Singh.), anything round. It can hardly be the Sanscrit word gajja, as it would be inappropriate as regards lights apparently so much smaller than the sun and moon.

vii, p. 371,—"Even the children of Wijaya by his first wife, Kuweni, united themselves with their maternal connections, on the repudiation of their mother, and retained the attributes of the Yakkhos." He refers, as his authority, to the seventh chapter of the *Mahawanso;* but this proves the exact contrary. It is there distinctly stated that, so far from doing so, they were compelled to flee with their uncle to avoid their mother's fate, and that Wijaya himself came to their refuge, assigning to them a place of security from their incensed "maternal connections" in "the Sumanta mountain," probably Saffragam, far removed from the scene of their mother's brief triumph and death (the present district of Putlam).

* One copy of the *Mahawanso* describes the scene of her death as near Tamenawillo, *i. e.*, Tamenanewera, near Putlam. Her spirit is still supposed to haunt a well in the neighbourhood, whence she issues forth, invisible, and pelts with great stones rash treasure-hunters who invade her solitude in search of the treasure they believe is buried near.

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

the prey, especially if it was sleeping. In this way the Veddas occasionally fell victims, and in consequence they revenged themselves by exterminating the Pygmies. According to my authority, the Nittawo existed at the time of his grandfather, who, he asserted, took an active part with the other members of his clan in burning out one of their encampments. 173

The Nittawo were an entirely naked race; the females were shorter than the males. Their language appears to have been understood by the Veddas, and was described to me as like the twittering of birds.

My informant knew nothing of their customs, or if they made use of fire. They were, however, unarmed, and appear to have been finally exterminated by the Veddas about three or four generations ago.

I may here mention that as I was sceptical as to the story about this race, I took particular care to make inquiries at the distant village of Waradeniyawa (the furthest inhabited spot on the south of the Buttala-Wedirata) if the oldest inhabitant of that place could give me any confirmation of it. This inquiry was made when Dissan Hamy was not present, and it would have been impossible for my questions to have been anticipated. To my surprise, a very old man of the village completely confirmed in detail Dissan Hamy's description.

I also made further inquiry at another village from a headman, and he repeated the same story, adding that the Nittawo were destroyed by the Veddas out of fear.

It is difficult to reject as false a story, told devoid of the usual fantastic embellishments that characterize the history of mythical creatures such as Yakko, when it is completely confirmed by parties ignorant of what the others have said. Even though tangible evidence is not forthcoming, and it would be difficult to find any, of a people so primitive as these creatures appear to have been, I see no valid reason for disbelieving the statements made to me.

It would appear that the early Vedda and the Nittawo to some extent lived side by side, and both were primitive. In time the Nittawo were destroyed by a race who were armed, and these in turn were disintegrated and absorbed by forces they were powerless to overcome. The clan system was 174

4: Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 effectual so long as there were no influences to weaken it, but when once a preponderating force came to surround these clans, their chance of survival was small, and to prevent individual extinction amalgamation presented the path of minimum resistance.

The effect of this amalgamation was to break down the primitive methods, and concurrently to infuse new blood, and with it to stay, or lessen, the forces that were weakening an already over-inbred stock.

101 161 If we refer to certain statistics, as recently as 1840 we find that a rough enumeration of the so-called Rock-Veddas disclosed that only thirty families in Bintenna then existed.

Since then the increase of civilized races pressed with yearly greater insistence, till we are forced to conclude that the primitive Vedda is now no more, or nearly so.

142 In my Paper read at the meeting of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on September 19, 1914, I have described the features of the Vedda family I found at Setawa, but I venture here to repeat it for easy reference.

The man Dissan Hamy is about 5 ft. 10 in. in height, thin, small round the chest, with rather short arms, slender legs, with hardly any calf development. He does not know his age. His head is small, with small dark-brown beady eyes [302] set far back in their sockets. His hair is short, not tied in a knot, staring, and frizzy. His younger brother is shorter in stature, but with the same character of hair on the head. The elder has short, scanty, and bristly moustaches, but in both brothers there is a marked scarcity of hair on the face and body. Dissan Hamy's two sisters are both of normal height, and dress like the other women of the country. They are about 5 ft. 3 in. in height, with slender limbs. Both women are mothers, and both indicated the small breast development that appears to be characteristic of women residing [302 954] in the arid parts of the country I explored. In both women the hair is short and frizzy. Their infants had shaved heads.

I remarked that the skin of Dissan Hamy's body is darker than that of the other members of the family. The nose is strongly formed, with thin dilated nostrils. The mouth is rather wide, with lips of no unusual thickness.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 . AX5 Vedda AX5

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THERE is little of hunting in these pages, much of the forest-folk and their ways. I have purposely refrained, except in one section, from introducing incidents of sport—of which, truth to tell, I have had small share—into a narrative primarily designed to describe the more human and homely aspects of jungle life, especially where as it concerns the Veddas—the last remnant of Ceylon's aboriginal race.

Regarding the origin of the Veddas, I incline to the view that they are an off-shoot of one of the wild, autochthonous tribes of India, who crossed over to Ceylon, in prehistoric times, when the two lands were one, and subsequently got cut off by the inroad of the sea. They appear to be very akin to the Gonds of India. Indeed, the description of a present day Gond might just as well apply to the Vedda :—" A man of small sturdy build, with piercing eyes and a free athletic carriage..... axe hitched on shoulder, bow and arrows in hand ".*

I must acknowledge help I have received from many friends. Apart from those to whom reference is made in foot-notes in the text I am indebted to Mr. F. Lewis for much valuable advice in the planning of some of our journeys ; to him and Mr. C. Drieberg I owe the botanical names of trees. Three of the trips described here were made in the company of Mr. Leigh Smith, to whom, I take this opportunity, of expressing my gratitude for much valuable help in the preparation of my manuscript for the press.

The pen and ink illustrations are by Mr. E. F. Van Dort.

Colombo

R. L. SPITTEL

[p. v]

[p. vi is blank]

* " Rifle and Romance in the Indian Jungle ", by A. I. R. Glasfurd